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CAN GWOT PRIMARY PREVENTION STRATEGY MORE EFFECTIVELY IMPEDE RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM?

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ABSTRACT

Primary prevention, as a medical term, involves taking action to prevent problems from occurring before the onset of symptoms. This concept, when related to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) in the Middle East, provides insights on the current strategy's effort and effectiveness in staying ahead of religious extremism expansion. Current U.S. focus and expenditure of resources in Iraq and Afghanistan are very expensive and largely a treatment of religious extremism symptoms. To realize cost effective and enduring effects, Middle East primary prevention strategy requires increased emphasis, updated strategic objectives, and implementation analysis. Existing regimes, with their stability, influence, and control over the vast pool of undecided moderate Muslims, are the critical point of strength and vulnerability for both sides. The strategic objective of cauterization, strengthening the states surrounding the country facing an insurgency, is the most valid approach to achieve the end state of isolated pockets of extremism. Diplomacy through principled negotiation, unilateral hegemonic restraint, and a multi-lateral focus of execution will provide the U.S. legitimacy and leverage to realize the efficacy of primary prevention.

CAN GWOT PRIMARY PREVENTION STRATEGY MORE EFFECTIVELY IMPEDE RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM?

Primary prevention, as a medical term, involves taking action to prevent problems from occurring before the onset of symptoms. Immunization is an example of how protection helps avoid the suffering and burden associated from a disease while also providing a significant cost effective and lasting condition of health.[1] This concept, when related to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) in the Middle East, provides insights on the current United States strategy, effort, and effectiveness in staying ahead of the expansion of religious extremism. Current U.S. focus and expenditure of resources in Iraq and Afghanistan are expensive and largely a treatment of religious extremism symptoms. As this problem continues to magnify, it has been anything but traditional with its host of global non-state actors utilizing irregular and asymmetric forms of warfare. While this unique threat denies a known prescriptive plan for success, policy and implementation review suggest new directions to realize cost effective and enduring effects. As a central antidote for religious extremism, current GWOT primary prevention strategy in the Middle East requires increased emphasis, updated strategic objectives, and a multi-lateral focus of execution.

This paper outlines and subsequently analyzes the GWOT assumptions of the key components of the strategic environment, perceived sources of religious extremism, and enemy vulnerabilities. The current center of gravity (COG) and GWOT strategic objectives are defined and assessed for feasibility, suitability, and acceptability, as well as their relation to primary prevention. Following this, current implementation methods are studied for primary prevention effectiveness by exploring concepts of principled negotiation along with an analysis of varying forms of power the U.S. brings to the process. An analysis of other countries perceptions as well as U.S. self-awareness regarding multilateral negotiations is the final step towards developing conclusions and recommendations which will improve the U.S. global position and ultimately obtain primary prevention objectives.

Current U.S. Assumptions and Primary Prevention Strategy for the GWOT?

Critical to the success of any strategic planning process is proper determination and analysis of the assumptions. They largely determine what is to be considered while providing the direction for further decisions.[2] Key components of the strategic environment that drive the current GWOT strategy are assessed to be extremists, moderates, and opportunists.[3] Extremists are those who advance their ideological purposes through violent means while moderates are the group presently ambivalent towards the extremist cause. Opportunists are

those that undercut international law and contribute to an environment of corruption.[4] These participants, linked in a transnational setting, make up the key external individuals for determining GWOT strategy.

The Al Qa'ida Associated Movement (AQAM) remains the most organized non state actor and a primary driver of religious extremism in the Middle East. The strategic goal of AQAM is promotion of a radically separatist ideology which seeks to preserve a puritanical, strictly fundamentalist form of Islam. The modernism, decadence, and temptation of Western culture are seen as destructive influences that must be eliminated to enable this subservient community.[5] Violence is the key means to support the ways of ejecting Western influence to provide the separatist ends of this ideology. This doctrine obligates all followers to active participation in armed struggle against the West with no distinction between military and civilian targets.[6] As an ideology of isolationism and violence, it offers little area for compromise or potential for coexistence. These AQAM controlled desires of repression and dominance across the Muslim world and beyond inevitably create a collision course with other moderate and pragmatic ways of life.[7]

Perceived sources of extremism include political alienation, grievances that can be blamed on others, subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation, and an ideology that justifies murder.[8] Of these considered sources, only political alienation has a root cause outside the misinformation campaign based upon violent ideology. Other sources of extremism the national strategy recognizes but states are "not simply the result of," include the Israeli-Palestinian issue and U.S. interventionism.[9] While not a direct source of extremism, the unacceptable perception of a one-sided approach to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process impacts relations with all Muslims.[10] This involvement, combined with other American influence in the region, stirs Arab political emotions of resentment to colonialism and past efforts to defeat the Israelis.[11] Other sources not included in national strategy but have important impact regarding primary prevention include corruption, injustice, and fear of Western domination which leads to anger, humiliation, and a sense of powerlessness.[12] These, along with political alienation, Israeli-Palestinian issues, and American intervention are the most contributory factors of the overall problem due to their negative effect on both extremists as well as moderates.

Redefining the Center of Gravity

Clausewitz identifies a center of gravity or COG, as the focal point and source of strength which can also be looked at as a critical vulnerability from which everything depends.[13] Although the sources and goals of AQAM may seem imperious, U.S experts assess their

primary prevention vulnerabilities as propaganda operations, recruitment, and ideology.[14] The attainment of AQAM goals revolves around the growth and expansion of this cycle. Regarding these vulnerabilities, current national strategy further defines the extremist ideology as AQAM's strategic center of gravity.[15] This ultimate political solution of radical ideology governing the Muslim world is unpopular with the vast majority of Muslims.[16] By countering and exposing the ideology, it's recruitment of the moderate followers of Islam will be denied, thereby breaking the cycle of expansion.[17]

Additional vulnerabilities that warrant consideration include the lack of safe havens, a decentralized following, and competition among leaders to gain more recruits. Due to these, AQAM is forced to conduct strategic communication via public venues.[18] This forced open source communication, itself a vulnerability, has an added windfall of providing valuable unfiltered intelligence of their problems and ultimate goals. Fears which consume them focus on loss of public opinion due to violence and creation of public disorder, and counter-information operations.[19] Excessive violence, particularly against Muslims, provokes government crackdowns on the innocents. When combined with aggressive counter-information operations, this has caused devastating movement setbacks in the past.[20] Other problems of concern include unity of effort, internal leadership struggles for control, operations that ignore ethnic minorities and tribes, and moderate clerics that challenge their legitimacy and siphon off recruits.[21] Lastly, a vulnerability that has recently promoted their presence is the continuation of Muslim related conflicts which offer the background to insert their ideology and violent means as an alternative to status quo situations.[22]

Existing regimes, with their stability, influence, and control over the vast pool of undecided moderate Muslims, are the critical points of strength and vulnerability therefore qualifying as the more appropriate center of gravity. As mentioned above, current national strategy identifies extremist ideology as the COG. This presumption, however, puts forward a very broad area with numerous potential points from which to attack and defend. An alternative broad contemplation suggests recruitment of the politically uncommitted Muslims, if contained, will isolate AQAM and allow for a military solution.[23] The reforming of autocratic Islamic governments is also seen as addressing many of the sources which will result in moderate institutions the extremists would have to compete against.[24] A better, more defined and realistic option suggests short and midterm battles against extremism will be won by existing regimes.[25] Defining existing regimes as the COG offers concentrated effort toward the focal points of ideology and recruitment while addressing the major AQAM goal of expansion. It also allows

the traditional conduit of state to state communication and diplomacy while addressing specific local or national peculiarities.

The current primary prevention strategy proposes an unrealistic goal of creating a global environment that is inhospitable to extremism through the advancement of democracy.[26] While there is ample evidence effective democracy is suitable in addressing the sources of extremism in a positive manner, the grand scale of timeline and effort required questions the feasibility and acceptability of support required from all sides for accomplishment. Dangers in such a strategy are conflict and crisis in traditional societies where parties do not exist, or empowerment of undesirable but better organized parties in states where they do exist.[27] If fully free elections were held within the Middle East region, Islamist parties would win most states.[28] A significant hurdle to overcome is that the Islamic world is largely non-democratic, and movement towards greater electoral participation is as revolutionary as the ideology promoted by AQAM.[29] Also, the sheer scale of change desired will require generations when dealing with demographic, ethnic, and sectarian problems along with defective judicial systems, lacking human rights, and sparse numbers of pragmatic or experienced leaders.[30] The risks, obstructions, and timeline required to bring about effective democracy within this primarily Arab region make it an unsuitable and unrealistic strategic objective for addressing the GWOT.

A more feasible strategic objective is to focus on the recommended COG of stable existing regimes with a pragmatic goal of reform over time on a case by case basis. The concept of cauterization, strengthening of states surrounding the state facing an insurgency, denies turning the insurgency into one of regional liberation by encouraging reform at the national level.[31] By helping a partner regime with a relatively small effort early, the point of "critical mass," where the opponents become more formidable, is denied.[32]   It's important that while reform is crucial, it must be done as windows of opportunity present themselves within individual nations and supporting what is practical to accomplish.[33] Political, religious, and intellectual leaders within these nations must be convinced it's in their best interest to actively engage extremism on religious and ideological levels.[34] The Islamic states must be empowered and realize they are not the victim of a U.S. modern world. They hold the key to victory and must start dealing with their own terrorists, dictatorial, and religious extremists while promoting a reform effort to address these issues.[35]   In summary, existing regimes are the COG, where U.S. support of Islamic state self-determinism and realistic reform efforts, not immediate democratization, will be the key in denying AQAM expansion and providing enduring stability.

<u>Are Current Implementation Methods Achieving Primary Prevention Objectives?</u>

The execution plan requires the same thought and assessment used to yield the refined strategy above. What follows is an analysis of current implementation methods since most of those same ways will be utilized to enable the objective of AQAM cauterization. As this primary prevention strategy centers on relations with other nations, diplomacy is the main element of national power employed which then tailors other national power efforts for the individual countries. Given the level of dialogue required, review of our international diplomatic and political communications, with their limitations, leverage points, and vulnerabilities, are critical. How others perceive the U.S. compared to how the U.S. perceives itself must also be analyzed as to whether the U.S. truly understands the countries it communicates and negotiates with for solutions. Along these same lines, concepts which promote collaboration and satisfaction of mutual interest will be explored to ensure enduring success.

Diplomatic

Since this is an effort between two different nations to arrive at a result, the bargaining decisionmaking process is the most appropriate. The rational process is inappropriate due to its assumed shared values on all sides when considering courses of action and reaching defined goals.[36] When dealing with different cultures and national interests, it would be impossible to agree on common ground in these areas and then arrive at a "rational" conclusion accepted by all. The bargaining process offers the best hope for acceptable decisions through gradual mutual adjustment which incrementally arrive at a decision. [37] Another consideration is the consequence of this inclusive process is often viewed as important as the outcome.[38] The bottom line, it would be foolish to assume another country would fully accept a policy or decision proposed by the U.S. from a self-regarded rational model.

With the above process embraced for international relations, the importance as well as key methods of principled negotiations are further examined. This non-winning type of negotiation potentially delivers a durable agreement that addresses the issues of both parties. It primarily involves working in a non-positional way to satisfy collective interests.[39] This translates to approaching negotiations with end state desires and effects vis-à-vis defined ways and means to get there. Key methods include building relationships with the other participants, understanding their point of view, and confronting misunderstanding with direct communication. The U.S. must consider, from the other side's point of view, issues of security, economic well being, recognition, and sense of belonging and control while also considering how their critics will judge them on the agreement.[40] Improving relative negotiating power by developing a best

alternative to negotiated agreement (BATNA), and also comprehending the other side's, is equally as important as principled negotiation.[41] By understanding the BATNA imbalance, reasonable expectations can be made as well as alternatives should negotiations not come to settlement.

There are actions that severely deter and restrict principled negotiation and thereby hinder attainment of the overall primary prevention objectives. Hubris and hegemonic ego are serious impediments to any form of lasting agreement when working the diplomatic side of national power.[42] These overbearing attitudes must be harnessed to realize the potential of principled negotiation and the value of not resorting to other more costly powers later. A positional approach further complicated by grandstanding can also have disastrous implications in negotiations.[43] This creates "lines in the sand" that one side will have to cross in the public arena should a bargain remain within reach. A humble, appreciative attitude that remains tough on the issues will maximize negotiations by keeping human emotions at a minimum.

International legitimacy, as another important part of diplomacy, is a subjective condition mainly derived from one's perception.[44] It results from consistency of compliance with agreed upon practices and rules and is complimentary to overall power. Selective application of the rules by the more powerful will meet resistance and raise charges of practicing double standards.[45] This damage is more extensive when universal values such as human rights and political reform, as most vocally advocated by the U.S., are overlooked in the name of national interests. While any country, especially one as powerful as the U.S., can break international rules in the name of national interests, legitimacy is the price that is paid. This breach of regulations negatively manifests itself when future U.S. interests desire compliance of others to international rules.

Military and Economic Elements of National Power

Explored next are the different forms of hard national power, along with limitations, the U.S. brings to the bargaining table and overall situation. The U.S. is currently recognized as a global superpower with unmatched military and economic power. Highly technical forces with global reach and full spectrum dominance provide military superiority without peer. Resources, location, and current wealth producing capacity also contribute to this enviable position. While diplomacy without power is hollow, this superiority has limits when connected to an established international order of numerous sovereign states with differing interests. Physical force, as the ultimate form of diplomacy, has limitations for even the most powerful. In the extreme, if force is used beyond vital interests, others will band together to offer a balancing power.[46] Likewise,

force used too frequently risks undermining internationally recognized limitations, loses its deterrent effect in other situations, and can sacrifice overall legitimacy. This can also have troubling consequences with allies if their consent was withdrawn.[47] While hard power is necessary as an influencing factor of diplomacy, its overuse forgoes other diplomatic areas while bringing about global efforts to balance and neutralize it.

Information

Soft power, working as a cooperative rather than coercive force, is becoming a more important aspect as the global information age progresses. It is the universality and acceptance of a country's culture of establishing favorable rules and institutions in the international environment.[48] While not the same as influence and persuasion, its ability to entice and attract provide a complement to hard power in reaching desires.[49] The values of democracy, personal freedom, upward mobility, and openness that are often expressed in American popular culture, higher education, and foreign policy contribute in this area.[50] Examples such as America's technical achievements and Hollywood productions wield enormous influence in the Muslim world.[51] Demonstration of these positive effects through information systems could be leveraged to further national objectives if harnessed correctly. The attraction of this ideology stands in sharp contrast with extremism and could provide strategic leverage in containing and cauterizing AQAM. Although soft power does not belong to the government, its actions can reinforce or undercut the affect.[52] Arrogance, indifference to the opinions of others, and a narrow approach to national interests questions legitimacy and undermines soft power. By showing strategic restraint in areas of real hard power advantage, the U.S. allows multilateral participation that contributes to a sense of fair play, enhances soft power, and reduces other countries desires to unite to balance American hard power.[53] The various national power sources, their interrelatedness, and ability to deliver lasting strategic objectives must be carefully considered before implementing a primary prevention strategy.

U.S. Vulnerabilities and Blind Spots

While the U.S. enjoys a "uni-polar power" over many spectrums of the international environment, there are also areas of vulnerability that reduce negotiation strength in the GWOT situation. With this immense power the U.S. has developed a habit of unilateralism. Over the last decade, the U.S. has increasingly resisted the international community over land mines, chemical weapons, environmental regulations, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.[54] Also, by seemingly demanding special treatment in the form of immunity from the International Criminal Court (ICC), the world community sees in the U.S. an unwillingness to abide by the same laws

that apply to other nations.[55] Failure of U.S. ratification, along with separate Article 98 bilateral agreements, has severely undermined ICC legitimacy and bolstered world perception of U.S. unilateralism. Furthermore, recent coalitions of the willing to satisfy short term U.S. interests have undermined cooperation in the international environment.

As another vulnerability, the U.S. national security organization is not optimized to deal with an insurgency threat which plays out in a protracted, ambiguous, and indecisive battle space.[56] Much of our national strategy revolves around military effort when history has shown better effectiveness against insurgency type conflicts through perseverance and restrained use of force with emphasis on intelligence, law enforcement, and political action.[57] Notable U.S. victories over insurgencies include the Philippines after 1898 and Haitia and Nicaragua during the interwar period. Since much of the problem required getting the people of the country behind the counterinsurgency, these well-conceived plans included carefully crafted political components. [58]

Within the negotiation process itself, a majority of fragile states or regions requiring U.S. attention have major political, economic, and social shortcomings. This presents limited leverage in finding ways to effectively encourage reform. Frequently, these states conclude our interests will not let them fail and therefore reduce their urgency for change. [59] As an example, in the 1980's El Salvador undertook serious reforms only when the U.S. Congress threatened to cut off support if significant government improvements were not made. Oftentimes, the greater the U.S. interest in protecting a partner regime, the less leverage it has.[60] Lastly, U.S reliance on oil from unstable parts of the world weakens its positional strength when dealing with oil rich nations and empowers them with staggering revenues as oil prices remain high.[61] These vulnerabilities degrade U.S. quality for best alternatives to negotiated agreement (BATNA) , but if addressed in a satisfactory manner, can provide future areas of leverage.

As an important part of negotiation, knowing the other side's perceptions brings valuable insights, especially when contrasts are seen between what was anticipated and the actual. The irony of world perception is that it currently both admires and despises America. American values and democratic institutions are held in high esteem within this region, particularly among younger Muslims and Arabs.[62] Hard power intervention aside, what is troublesome to European as well as Arab nations, is the hegemonic vision the U.S. portrays as to how the world order should be defined.[63] In particular is the Arab perception of Israeli-Palestinian bias, proven by U.S. government administrations consistently taking the Israeli point of view.[64] Another example which creates cynicism is democracy promotion rhetoric while at the same time backing undemocratic regimes such as Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.[65] The U.S. arrogance of

setting the rules on the international political and economic systems is seen as exclusionary while encroaching on the power of others. Others perceive an American unilateralism of ideology which lectures without listening and is disinterested in other opinions.[66] This perceived overreach of U.S. power generates national cohesiveness among others in a common effort to resist U.S. power.[67]

U.S. self-perception is one of a rational actor espousing, defending, and leading universal values and rules based upon objectivity.[68] It is the American belief their system has transcended ethnic biases and provides a universal culture which should be the norm. Americans find it troubling and surprising that anyone would think of their values and cultures as anything but altruistic.[69] Americans see democracy as a universal good they have accomplished very well from which others should naturally acquiesce and follow their lead.[70] Globalization, from the American point of view, is an accepted order to which other modes of economic organization are outdated and wrong.[71] Advocates now admit that globalization has winners and losers with associated human and cultural costs. Islamic nations often view the U.S., with its proven capability of extending and shaping the global economy, as having responsibility for narrowing the inequity. While the U.S. groups freedom, prosperity, and opposition to terrorism as "shared interests," Middle East countries see the wealthiest and most militarily powerful country as unwilling to share this economical success.[72]

As the above perceptions are analyzed, many contrasts and blind spots in implementing U.S. policy emerge. A "rational actor" approach is irrelevant since there is no single set of universal values.[73] The important thing to grasp in the inherently subjective field of politics is that perceptions and interpretations matter as much as facts.[74] The U.S. sees itself as the altruistic and natural leader across democracy promotion and economic globalization. However, for many others in the world, there is an irritant with rules development, application consistency, and consideration for the less well endowed. Lastly, it is not the problem of policy being conveyed, but rather the process of policy development, the policy itself, and the tone of communication that creates problems before and during the implementation phase.[75] The U.S. is caught in a hegemonic bind of perceived power and persuasion misuse and the corresponding pushback from others to balance and neutralize this overstretch.

Effective Implementation of the Primary Prevention Strategy: Cauterization

Based on this analysis, the strategy of cauterization may in fact serve as the best chance for primary prevention success and avoid the more expensive and dangerous battle for areas of manifested extremism. This strategy exploits the strategic vulnerabilities of extremist ideology,

recruitment, and expansion. By focusing on existing stable states surrounding current areas of conflict, efforts are most appropriately focused to prevent further growth by addressing those seeds of extremism. Existing states provide use of internationally recognized means of communication while addressing particular social, economic, and political problems.[76] They offer established boundaries, infrastructure, and institutions of government to best facilitate order and reform. This strategy endeavors to isolate AQAM into small fugitive bands in deep cover, cut off from a popular support base with no political power to continue their struggle.[77] The established merits of this strategy are useless without an effective implementation effort. What follows are key approaches and action items to realize the primary prevention strategy of cauterization.

A core element of this strategy is changing from hegemonic unilateral tendencies and attitude towards an approach that synergizes multilateralism effectiveness. The world understands and respects the global power of the U.S. and its capability to unilaterally exercise this power across military, economic, and diplomatic forms. In the interconnected global environment, however, this power advantage applied in a unilateral fashion becomes difficult to maintain over time and is not well received by potential partners. The U.S. concerns of combating terrorism, stemming flow of illegal drugs, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting sustainable development of good governance across the globe, all require multilateral solutions and cooperation.[78] International institutions are of particular importance in dealing with not only extremists and moderates, but also the opportunists that hope for economic gains via their parasitic involvement. To realize these goals, the U.S. must sacrifice short term autonomy to create international stability. This applies to intervention practices as well as adherence to international rules and institutions. While it could result in over-involvement in undesirable international disputes or loss of desired control in others, this restriction of autonomy will reassure the world U.S. power is in compliance.[79] U.S. unilateral efforts must be reserved for vital situations only in order to preserve the multilateral option and requirement in servicing other long term concerns.

Similar to unilateralism, the U.S. must curb it's appetite of hard power usage and leverage alternate forms of influence to achieve lasting results and shape its overall image. The Iraqi conflict provides a warning that direct action should only be considered after an honest assessment of costs, risks, ability to achieve the desired end objective, and alternate means.[80] Hard power and its reputation provide real and instant influence; however, the patient and clever shadow of power provides more enduring success. Excess or overuse in any area makes enduring success less likely.[81] Developing areas of cooperation allows a better chance of policy success rather than the more complex and less predictable aftermath which often results when

physical force is used.[82] The U.S. ensures this form of power is second to none in having developed and resourced an exponentially superior military across all spectrums. Conversely, other forms of power associated with primary prevention, such as public diplomacy and outreach programs, are not as well regarded which can be directly correlated to funding levels.[83] The U.S. must not only consider diplomacy over forms of hard power, but must also resource diplomatic efforts to robust this form of national power to the same influential status military power currently enjoys.

Along with an increased quantity of diplomatic effort, U.S. negotiating techniques necessitate review for dealing with the often misunderstood Middle Eastern region. To begin, the U.S. should amend the mindset of directed change, to one of principled negotiation arriving at a mutually beneficial solution. The current regional perception of a self-serving crusader must be acknowledged and addressed. A quiet, behind the scenes approach using surrogates and friends provides the synergistic effects of avoiding U.S. heavy handedness and reducing anti-American propaganda for possible use by AQAM.[84] While mindset and delivery are crucial in diplomacy, understanding the other side's point of view is equally important. The U.S. must develop a better cultural understanding of the nature of the Islamic faith in general with the realization there can be large differences between the Middle East nations. Relationships must be developed and cultivated routinely during ordinary times before anything critical is at stake.

Political alienation, as a root source of extremism, must be addressed within these countries at both the national and individual level. At the individual level, a key to defeating extremism includes providing personal security, jobs, education, and health care with economic opportunity in the future.[85] While sweeping human rights and political reform are valid long term goals, surveys have shown the individual desires to be of primary realistic interest.[86] At the national level, globalization must be managed and balanced against social goods such as maximum employment, social security, social cohesion, cultural capital, and overall quality of life.[87] Not unlike capitalism, globalization can only bring about a greater good by being managed and controlled to address concerns mentioned.[88] These issues, combined in a reasonable and pragmatic fashion with adequate funding, can bring about a solution that addresses the interests of all parties. The U.S. must realize, however, that while reform can be encouraged, it cannot be mandated. Much of the burden for these changes lies on the shoulders of the regimes themselves. It is the U.S. charter to promote the interests as mutually beneficial while not demanding and causing pushback, thereby delaying reform, which will result in extremist opportunity.

Although not included in detail within the context of this research effort; a contentious issue that warrants added U.S. attention is the Israeli-Palestinian issue. In order to enhance and regain legitimacy within the region, renewed effort must be put forth to reconcile this matter. The techniques and tools proposed above must be exercised even handedly and in a multilateral arena. While the product of a solution may not yet be in reach, an inclusive and objective process must continue to be labored. This effort and concern is required if other Islamic nations are to embrace U.S. interests in the region which require their cooperation. If the U.S. can be seen as an even handed broker during this process, radical elements on either side can be marginalized through international influence. This principled effort combined with other consistent approaches can add great value to U.S. legitimacy and further interests in the region.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Dealing with religious extremism before it becomes symptomatic, similar to the medical community's approach to health care, offers a more cost effective and enduring strategy for the United States. Looking at this problem through a 20-year lens, indications are the country will not support 150,000 troops deployed into this volatile region. Nor will its citizens support the price tag of these ongoing operations and the associated human loss. Despite a continued need for military support to deal with the symptoms of violent extremism; successful primary prevention can greatly reduce this expenditure by containing the problem.

To realize an enduring end state of isolating AQAM into small bands with no popular support, while balancing available ways and means, a primary prevention approach continues to offer the best solution and should therefore be emphasized. The Middle Eastern states have the infrastructure and institutional control that can address political, economic, and social problems while also serving as the frontier for extremist expansion and recruitment. To protect this COG, the strategic objective of cauterization must be pursued. The U.S. has great potential to influence this effort but must shift emphasis to diplomacy through principled negotiation. This includes a shift from unilateral tendencies of intervention and ethnocentric rational solutions to a multilateral unity of effort. This will involve occasional surrender of power advantages and usual comprehensive control over situations of interest. This is absolutely necessary, however, to leverage legitimacy and soft power sources which can then lead to collaborative solutions. It must be understood that the desired U.S. end state and strategic objectives cannot be realized without the help of others. Within this strategy, U.S. negotiations must convince Middle Eastern nations that our interests of extremist isolation are mutual. Globalization concerns and political

reform offer each side empowerment to negotiate solutions that address these matters while countering the radical and suppressive extremist ideology. As a separate issue of regional concern, the U.S. must renew effort on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

This strategy provides the capability to address sources of extremism and vulnerabilities on both sides through focused diplomatic effort. An honest adjustment of U.S. attitude, approach, and self-assessment is required to improve other national power sources and the negative perception and image of American hegemony. By addressing these items of change and focusing on the strategic objective of cauterization, a more secure global environment can be realized and costly expenditures of blood and national treasure reduced. As a central antidote for religious extremism, current GWOT primary prevention strategy in the Middle East requires increased emphasis, updated strategic objectives, and a multi-lateral focus of execution.

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